

2013-06-23 Working With Hindrances Bella

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Am I on here? Yeah. So good morning everyone.

One of the personal qualities which is not often emphasized in our circles, as one of the things that's one of the qualities are developed in practice, which are not often emphasized in our circles is the idea of strength. And one of the functions of the practice is to make us strong people. Sometimes the emphasis is on relaxation or being calm or being peaceful, which is certainly true. But if that's only thing that's taught, and then people could easily overlook the importance of developing strength. The and one of the best places for developing strength that I, you know, in terms of the practice is actually in meditation itself. That meditation develops a variety of inner sense of power or strength that we can then carry with us into our lives, so that we can meet our life or experiences, engage in it with personal strengths that supports us and supports others. That part of our ability to be peaceful economists and wise in the world is dependent on the sense of inner strength that we cultivate and developed. And one of the reasons why practice doesn't work for some people sometimes in the challenges of life is they might people might have learned the basic principles of practice of mindfulness and loving kindness and variety of things. And so the ideas of it all make sense, they've learned it, they even can do it in certain environments. But why we have trouble or sometimes in the challenges or situations of life, is because it's hard to apply those in less. In those situations unless we have some personal strength. We're not strong enough to meet the winds of the world, the ways in which all the different situations of the world can challenge us. So meditation practice as a laboratory or the gym, you can tell your friends, you're going to the gym, meditation gym, where you're going to work out and, and all the things we do in meditation that regulates the regularity of doing the practice, that will cultivate strengths that then you can carry with you. And so what I'd like to do today is to offer you five strengths that can be developed in practice, they're useful for practice and do them a little bit in reference going to what's called the hindrances, the, these are five different kinds of approaches of working with the so called hindrances, that are just useful way of working with them, when you do this regularly and they really apply yourself on this, these different five qualities can become strengths for you. And these two so and strength goes hand in hand with wisdom. So, these are the two important qualities are developing in practice. Wisdom has a lot to do in Buddhism, with, understood being wise about what undermines you to what hinders you what causes you problems in your life because you're suffering and rather than wisdom about the cosmic truths of reality, those are you certainly useful maybe there are such things, but it isn't so much like some have wisdom about some one Cosmic reality, as it is to be wise about how our own minds work, how we get in their own way, how we operate in such a way that we cause suffering stress problems for ourselves and for others. So a big part of Buddha's wisdom is understanding those things. When we understand them well of wisdom about it, then those things are not going to get in their way anymore. And then we're available to the world we're available to live our life in a way that's free, and then how that manifests is up to you and the situation. So the hindrances are, that which hinder clarity

hinder our ability to get strong, they hinder our wisdom. I like to think of translate the word he attends the word hindrance doesn't really translate the Pali word the original word in Pali. It's kind of an interpretive translation of the word.

I would like to suggest we could also translate the word as The five under miners, the five things that undermine you. And part of the reason for that change is that there was a time in America where American Buddhists were very reluctant to use the word hindrance because it seemed too negative. You know, it's like, you know, we shouldn't be always looking at the problems and seeing everything as being, you know, that we're just filled with these vile hindrances. But, the idea of calling them want to undermine you, but no one wants to be undermined, so that may be more appealing. So five things that undermined you the hindrances to the hindrances, those of you don't know it, there are the five forces in the mind that we put a lot of emphasis on in our tradition. As forces we have to become wise about to understand really well learn how to work with so they don't undermine us. So sometimes sensual desire, first hindrance undermines people. Some people's lives are destroyed because of the power of addiction. to various kinds of sexual desire, ill will or hatred undermines people is a hindrance to clarity to wisdom to strike. And the third hindrance is called sloth and torpor. And this is a certain kind of strategies and approaches to leathery lethargy, resistance, the drain us may fit fourth hindrance is restlessness and worry. So there's a way in which being restless or agitated, and have a lot of worry undermines us. And then the last is doubt, that can be very undermining, deflate us quite dramatically keep us keep us from acting in the world or doing what needs to be done. So these are the five things that are important forces in the mind that in mindfulness practice we are meant to learn about and be wise about. So, five ways five approaches and there I used the four approach Watching this I have the acronym Bella, b.e.l.l.a. And it's very I think one of the reasons I'm tickled by this wonderful acronym is that the mind is beautiful. Your mind is beautiful, if it's not hinder the beauty is not hindered. If the part of In fact, the to the, the system of Buddhist psychology calls the qualities of the mind, that are shining forth when the hindrances and those things don't obstruct them beautiful factors of the mind. So, Bella. So, the first five, so, five practices, the first installation, the hindrances are all kinds of challenges that we are having is to the B stands for be, just be, let it be, let yourself be. And this means in the midst of whatever challenge You have and this is why meditation works so well. in meditation, nothing needs to be fixed or solved. So we treat with First we train ourselves just to be with the experience in a very simple, direct way, not to be running away from it, not to be tackling it not to be caught up in the mind that wants to fix it, not to be judging it, not to be making all kinds of conclusions about it, meaning making, this means that I'm a lousy meditator. This means that I shouldn't meditate This means that the world sucks. You know, the, the mind has a great meaning making machine and so it's very easy. And so to train ourselves just to be is just to see, can we just be present for the challenge we have. So for caught up in desire or caught up in thoughts of ill will, don't be in a rush to fix anything, but rather, see if you can just kind of be present in the middle of it in a nonreactive way. The image that I kind of have used for myself for this kind of presence. from many years ago when I would visit my son's preschool, and it was sometimes wild, and it and we had this wonderful preschool teacher, who would stand in the middle of the room, calmly nonreactive just stand there. And sometimes you could watch the kids settle up, settle, settle down around him. So he had this ability just to be and in that being something begins to change. Part of being is let it be. So if you're caught up in sexual desire, lust, if you're caught up in anger or sloth and torpor, restlessness, let it be.

Let yourself be let it be. And this, I think, is a hugely important training. Some people find it such a relief, that they don't have to fix and do things all the time and learn to get out of their own way just to be there. It doesn't mean acting on it doesn't mean kind of actively, intentionally kind of thinking, well, Gil, so just let it be. So I'm really gonna get into it. It means like that preschool teacher standing there in the midst of it, let it be, but you know, find a way not to engage in it be against for it be against it. Just be.

And the suggestion here is that that's a strength. If you can cultivate that as a string, then you can bring that with you into your normal life as well. And there also, there's situations where the wisest thing to do is not to react, but to begin by just being there. Just be present and see what happens. Some situations take care of themselves, if we just be present. Offer time Be patient, see how it unfolds. Don't let the situation show itself to us. So that's a stretch a training to learn to do this. I'm not saying it's easy to do this. And that's why we meditation is this Jim are we keep coming back trying to do that you were given lots of opportunities to do that. As we learn how to be with the experience more fully and more, let ourselves be in a nonreactive way, then the next step is to examine it, to learn from it to investigate. And so a hugely important part of Buddhist practice is to look more deeply What is this experience really about? To examine. So, in terms of the hindrances, there are two general things to examine. Or such I would say three, three things. First is to examine the experience itself. So as we be with experience, learn how to be with it, that makes me means when I interfering or doing something with it, so we can look at it with greater detail, what is a hint? What is desire, really, like? What are the different elements of it, of anger, ill will. It's all these things are composite, they're made up of different things different. So rather than seeing it as a one single thing, what are all the forces and activities sector involved with having a desire. There's physical, what's happening to you physically, energetically, when you're caught up in the throes of a strong desire? What's happening emotionally, when you have a strong desire? What's happening in your mind? What are your thoughts and beliefs and stories? You're telling yourself? What are the intentions that you have? What are you trying to accomplish? So it's possible to kind of sit and be present and to kind of begin exploring what is this experience, not to analyze it, as if you know, it's like an engineering project and all the elements. The idea is to stay in that just being present mode. And then what what shows itself we feel and registered more fill up fully? What's this experience like? And some people find that this helps them become stronger both because they're strengthen the capacity to be present in a nonreactive way. It strengthens their capacity to investigate and again, investigation examination. ability to look more deeply is a is a faculty which can be developed. As it becomes more and more developed, then we can see more clearly, people who don't see the forces of their mind are at the whims of the forces of their mind. They don't see that there have it, they have a choice in how they behave. But as we can examine and see more deeply, what's actually going on, there's much more choice, and choice brings freedom. So we stopped to look at that. And one of the basic questions in our practice is, what is this? What is this being very careful not to be too intellectual or too filled with thoughts about it? examination, I think, especially the first kind of approach to examination or investigation in this practice, is to just use the inner eye to see or feel or experience that they more fully, as opposed to try to think about if you're getting caught up in thoughts what might be, then you're kind of probably not developing the best form of this examination. So hidden in this situation wouldn't be thinking about all the past causes and conditions of your whole life that led up to it, it was just what is this experience in and of itself. So, and as we do this, and see this made up a different thing, sometimes it's easier to continue developing to be in practice. If you see that strong desire is a lot of surging energy in your body, sometimes then it's easier just to be with that energy, rather than be driven by it and, you know, just feel it to be with it.

So, the first thing to investigate is what it is in and of itself, the second shades into this idea of, of, you know, thinking about understanding more deeply, and this is to understand the cause of it, what is brought it, what is it what is triggered it. Everything that occurs occurs because of causes and conditions. And so we might say that whatever occurs has been triggered by something else. So in terms of the hindrances, what's triggered it for you? You were driving down the freeway, and there was a billboard for the latest and greatest new gadget. And then you find for the rest of the day, you can't stop thinking about wanting that gadget. And so what are the causes of it was that you looked at a billboard, you drive down the freeway every day to work. And every day they put up a new Billboard. And you notice it every day, you have a new desire. And you spend the day thinking about that. So you

start seeing there's a disconnection between what I see in the Billboard. And so then you can start becoming Why is it well, that there seems to be a causal connection or the billboard is a condition for how I am and I say, I have a hard time work doing my work at work because I have to keep thinking about getting this thing. So I think tomorrow when I go to work, I'm not going to look at billboards. So you understand something about the cause and conditions for triggers it And with or it might be, there's a belief that you carry with you that about, you know, can be a belief about how people should treat you. If only if people treat you with certain level of respect, are they doing the right thing? So if they treat you disrespectfully, and it goes against your, your belief of how things should be, then that might be a condition for your anger. Is it necessary to be angry if people disrespect you, I don't think is necessary to have it. So if you don't kind of just assume that of course, this is how the world is built that anger follows naturally out of someone disrespect from you? Then you would investigate what's really going on? What are the beliefs, what are the attitudes, what's the self identity issues that come into play? So what triggers it And the third thing to investigate is your relationship to the challenges you have your relationship to what your hindrances and this called This is understand better, how to Learn to be with it, to understand that you hate it that you have too much desire or you think this you really feel justified by it or you feel embarrassed or you feel it's a sin or you feel, you know, discouraged you know all these ways in which we attitudes we have towards it is very important to see. So, what it is in and of itself, what triggers it and the attitudes we have towards it, these are all things to understand. The third thing of BELLA is to lesson and lesson, I.e.s.s.o.n. And this means to diminish or reduce the intensity of it. And if you've sometimes you can see very quickly this is what's needed if it's really intense. But as we kind of learn to see more, what's really going on be present enough to see what is there to understand what's there. Sometimes it becomes obvious that this is dangerous. To keep this hindrance so strong in our lives, so particularly the first two, but sometimes doubt, so desire, and Ill will, can be so compelling that people make big mistakes, that doubt can be so compelling that interferes with their lives. So how do we lessen the intensity so that we can be wiser more balanced, we can kind of find our way not make a big mistake. So it might be that we learn to relax. Relaxing helps to can we relax the body, relax, maybe we can calm down, take some deep breaths can be helpful. Or perhaps, you know, the proverbial solution for last I been told is cold showers. That lessens the intensity perhaps. Or you know for something else, go for a run or go talk to a friend or there's an infinite number of things you can do to lessen the intensity of it. Sometimes it's actually wise to distract yourself from something thing. You see, I can't be with it. This is too hard. It's too compelling. I'm about to make a mistake. I better turn on the TV. Sometimes the TV is a terrible escape. Sometimes it's a way of lessening the intensity of something, not to escape from it. But so that it the intensity decreases enough that then later we can address it more realistically, we can look at it more seriously what's actually going on here. So worrying restless is the same thing. Sometimes worry gets so strong, that it's counterproductive to stay with it.

And so there's some way to lessen the intensity of the worry. so relaxing, listening, calming down, diminishing the strength of the next. Oh, wait a minute. I forgot to say something. So I apologize for interrupting my talk. This talk has been interrupted to bring you an important message and the important message Is that as like, as I go through these five, I would like you to consider which of these five is strongest for you strongest, what is the strongest in you, the one that you're most capable of. So there's just let it be and examine and then less than or diminish, okay. And now, the fourth one is to let go. The English, the books in English that translate the Buddha's discourses call this abandoned. So if you like abandoned, but people and people have abandonment issues, so it's kind of a strong word. So, Let go. Let go. So it's different than letting be. It means if you're clinging to something holding on tight, perhaps you can let go of it no longer hold on to it. So for example, if you can really see that desire arises out of a belief that if you have this thing, your life will be perfect ever after. You see, that's a belief. Maybe it's hard to let go of the desire, but maybe the belief, when you really see the belief, you

say, No, that doesn't work. And then maybe you're willing to let go of the belief and that takes the energy away from the desire. Or you might have a lot of anger about something. But underneath the anger was the expectation that you're supposed to get your way. And it was kind of subconscious this idea, but once you kind of see clearly that, you know, you believe you should get your way. Maybe you can kind of loosen or let go of that belief, and maybe the more productive ways of working in society in certain situations. So there it isn't that we let go of the healthy things to do in life. But we're trying to do here is letting go of those things which undermine us that limit our lives that hinder our lives and To understand the causes and the triggers for it, then perhaps we can let go of the things that you know that we do. I remember many years ago, I for a little while, I watched football games on television. And after watching a whole game, I remember I felt drained. And I guess we don't have the constitution for this kind of too much meditation or something. And so, and so I decided we just wasn't, so I let go of watching football games was relatively easy to do. And for me, but I so this isn't, this is not, you know, I don't feel good afterwards. So the idea of letting go. The practice of letting go and that can become a strength can be hard to let go. It's very hard sometimes. Sometimes you want to start developing like a muscle letting go. And so maybe some muscle you want to develop as you start where it's really easy. Maybe There are some easy places in your life where you can easily let go of something. And so you start there and then slowly begin working up and someday, you'll really need need that ability. It'll be really meaningful. You're about to punch out your neighbor and humanity. And that solves a lot of problems. I once wanted to punch someone out in in the meditation holiday. It was a meditation, meditation call in Asia. And there was this monk, I was a monk, we're all monks. And he was like, poking me and I'll admit that he poked me and do you know, all kinds of they're sitting there? After a while? I think this is what he had. He had a lot of animosity towards me. We were neighbors next to each other. On the tip me and so at some point, I thought, you know, I could just feel my fist just wanting to respond. But I don't know if I let go but I restrained kind of letting go maybe. Anyway, so sometimes, you know, the impulses are so strong that it you know, when you have developed the ability to let go throughout that as a strength situation you really need it, it'll come be really useful. And then the last step here is to appreciate.

So if you have managed to let go of overcome or diminish or even to understand deeply, your challenges, your hindrances, what undermines you, it's really helpful than to appreciate what, appreciate that. They appreciate what you've learned, appreciate you the ability to practice appreciate the ability to understand and appreciate the ability to have done something about it to diminish it. Appreciate the ability to let go. These are all good things, too. to congratulate yourself this is good, because it's a string that we want to carry with us the strength of appreciation or the boy, the Buddha didn't use the word appreciation so much use the word joy or delight. And he used them particularly with the hindrances, when we've managed to last longer be in there, caught by them. And to finally really be especially, it's really, you know, if you've had a really good bout of being caught in a hindrance, and you're working with it, and just has you by the throat. And then finally it diminishes finally it goes away and you're free of it. The encouragement is to enjoy, bring the light, wow, I might as free This is great. And to really feel what it's like to have a mind now that's free of being caught. And the reason for this appreciation is that that the light, it can become a strength that supports your practice that fuels your practice. It was a it took a while for me to understand this part of practice. Because my tendency is for being self deprecating, that things are just wrong, I'm not doing it right. I'm wrong somehow. Or we're so strong, that even if something went well, in practice, you know, something, I was able to let go of something. As soon as I let go of it, it was already in the past. And in the present, I could find something else that was wrong with me. You know, I wouldn't take the test. So the idea is, take your time, and appreciate the goodness that happens. The good things that happen appreciate that nap for now. I'm not caught anymore. Feel. Allow yourself to feel some delight and joy. Joy and delight is one of the foods that feeds the practice. It makes it easier to want to practice and makes you more more

appealing the idea of letting go. If you can feel that the joy of a clear mind and awake mind is so much more pleasant than any of the pleasures of the sensual desire you're after, then perhaps it's easier to let go. Essential desire. But if the pleasure the sensual desire is one of the greatest forms of delight that you have you know about, of course, you're going to want to pursue it some more. So the idea is to in practice is to cultivate joy or satisfaction, delight, which is greater than the promise that some of these hindrances provide. And so this again, it can happen through meditation practice, as we sit in the mind becomes free or the quality of a free mind for many people can be much higher through the meditation practice than going around their daily life. We have this concentrated time to really work on ourselves to work on. These are these various practices of being examining, lessening, letting go and appreciating in a way that we don't have a normal life. So perhaps in the course of meditation, a period of meditation over the week, so do meditation, some of the forces that keep us caught in it. into fall away, we're less than less caught. And we get a visceral felt sense experience of what it's like to be free, at least temporarily. And, and as you keep doing this over and over again, the sense of freedom, a sense of appreciation of joy can also become a strength that you carry with you. And so when you go into the world, not very far away, kind of sitting right on your right shoulder perhaps, or right the middle of your heart or your stomach almost ambesonne places physically almost, you can almost feel what it's like to have the strength of being balanced, being attentive, being present. Bending time being willing to look at things more carefully, the strength of just right there's the possibility of freedom in your experience. So Bella, so each of you I would suggest one of one of those five is stronger than the other. Wonder if some of you be willing to share with us which one you think is your strength? It doesn't have to be that strong, just stronger than the others. Maybe they're all terribly weak. But one of them happens to be less sweet than the others. We don't have to go into the relative, you know, degree here, but just which one is the strongest? So if you could use the mic, please.

There's a habit I've been trying to break recently. And, and I think the, the strongest one I've been paying attention to is examine. And what helped me was to when I'm examining this urge, you know, it's always at the same time of day and it's, it's so distinct, that I've started to look at it with humor, kind of To laugh at myself, rather than, you know, looking at it feeling guilty and just say, Wow, this is so it's first of all, it's so ridiculous. But and if I'm able to see it with some light heartedness, it's it's seems to be easier to to address

great so maybe maybe sometimes we can have Bella and knock with appreciation with him used to be amused Great, thank you

through meditation I have become aware of

a habit of worrying and, and now, again through meditation, I'm able to catch myself starting to worry and then just saying Nope, not gonna go there, you know, just let it go. And so I'm getting pretty good at letting go of worry.

Great. Thank you. I saw witness. What jumped

out at me is the, you know, this

is the first one or the second of the E examination. The whole idea of asking yourself what is this? For me at least really kind of takes me out of the situation. So not only am I being by drawing, if you pound microphone, right, and then I'm lessening, and I'm, you know, kind of just going through the other steps, but to do the, you know, the little the mental inventory, you know, you kind of step back and go, alright, what's going on with me? You can kind of drill down and see, mine always goes back to fear, you know,

what am I really afraid of, you know, and then there's all these other symptoms that kind of just pop up around that and then that way I can kind of let go Have all those other ones realizing what's really driving me at that time?

Great. Yeah, I agree examination is such a good thing to step out of the patterns as to how things are normally and changes the ecosystem.

So Gil,

what what is the difference between letting go and surrender? Letting Go and surrender? Surrender is what's the difference? surrender. What's the difference? Letting go you more in charge, surrender you give up. And we hope that you don't just surrender to the hindrances.

And I can imagine sometimes we let go, we give up. We let go. I mean, I certainly have surrendered in such a deep gives Give it up like it's hopeless but in doing that I surrender everything I've surrendered everything any hope to try to fix or to change or do something it just hopeless and but it functioned it wasn't intentionally this way but it function is such a deep letting go that even the problems I had to let go of in that moment so sometimes surrender is the only option so straight up straight behind you

I think that for me the strongest one is being the body is feeling the sensations in the body

is almost like

it is well is the breath is I it's hard to ignore it and once I feel that sensations in the body there's it goes to a mind about the choices I have. And it just is it just unfolds is like a rippling effect.

Great, thank you. So maybe maybe one more and then we'll stop.

The strongest of the five for me is appreciation or mudita appreciative joy. It seems like I can get there pretty easily, which is interesting because my strongest hindrances worry and fidget Enos restlessness, very definitely. But I can feel the joy. I mean, that just springs up for me in every moment,

right? Wonderful. Okay, so As a way, we're ending five minutes early. So what I'd like to suggest for those of you who would like to do this is that the since we have kind of a tea now and afterwards if you want to join 11 o'clock we'll have the community circle community meeting outside. But, you know, when this tea day, we have five extra minutes, that perhaps you can turn to someone next to you, maybe someone you don't know and just say hello, introduce yourself. And if you want to, you feel up to saying what your strength is, to them just be one word, right? Bella, one of the five. It doesn't it doesn't have to be you know, big revelations. But, but your share, share, share a little bit about yourself with the person here. Thank you.